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STATE FOR ISN/RA - R. NEPHEW AND J. DANIEL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/25/2020  
TAGS: PARM PREL IAEA SY IR TU UK  
SUBJECT: UK RESPONSE: SYRIA AT MARCH IAEA MEETING

REF: SECSTATE 16530

Classified By: Political Counselor Robin Quinville  
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C/NF) Poloffs delivered reftel demarche to Duncan Johnson, Regional Issues Desk Officer in the Counter-Proliferation Department (CPD) of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and Victoria Dunne, Syria and Lebanon Desk Officer in the Middle East and North Africa Department of the FCO, on February 25. Johnson and Dunne said that the UK shared U.S. concerns about Syria's lack of cooperation with the IAEA and about the message that Syria's defiance sent to other potential proliferators, including Iran.

¶2. (C/NF) Johnson noted that though this was the IAEA's sixth report on Syria, no real progress had yet been made on convincing Syria to cooperate with the IAEA. Johnson said that from a counter-proliferation perspective, it was worrying that a country could defy the IAEA in this way, and Dunne questioned what precedent Syria's example set for dealing with Iran. Johnson said that DG Amano's recent meetings with Foreign Secretary Miliband and Foreign Policy Adviser to No. 10 Simon McDonald indicated that while Amano realizes Syria is a concern, Amano's top priority is Iran; Dunne said that the UK was concerned that Amano's focus on Iran could lead to neglect of the Syria issue.

¶3. (C/NF) Johnson said that the UK was responding to the situation in three ways. First, together with EU Partners it is issuing a "fairly strong" statement at the Board of Governors meeting that calls for Syria to comply with IAEA requests and "does not lift the pressure" on Syria. (Note: The FCO passed Poloffs a confidential copy of the statement that we will email to NEA and ISN. End Note.) Second, it is raising the issue bilaterally when UK ministers meet with their Syrian counterparts (and Dunne noted that the UK welcomed recent U.S. rapprochement with Syria as well). Third, it is seeking intermediary countries to pass messages to the Syrians; an example is Turkey, who the UK last year successfully lobbied to intervene with Syria.

¶4. (C/NF) Johnson said that the UK's "higher objective" was to push the Syrians away from Iran, and noted that there was, at times, conflict between that goal and the goal of Syrian cooperation with the IAEA. On the issue of special inspections, Johnson said that the UK was "not at the moment" pushing this idea.

Middle East Nuclear-Free Zone

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¶5. (C/NF) Johnson said that FCO Director-General of Defence and Intelligence Mariot Leslie recently spoke with Under

Secretary Tauscher about a Russian proposal for a conference on a Middle East Nuclear-Free Zone. Johnson said that the UK viewed the Russian proposal as a possible way forward on the Syria issue, among others, and asked for U.S. views on this proposal.

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